

STATEMENT OF ALLAN B. TAYLOR TO THE EXECUTIVE & LEGISLATIVE
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

March 12, 2009

Good afternoon, Senator Looney and Representative Janowski, and members of the Committee. I am honored to have been renominated for another term as a member of the State Board of Education, and I am deeply grateful to Governor Rell for giving me the opportunity to continue serving.

I am passionately committed to public education. I believe that a strong system of public education is essential to our democracy, because the success of our collective efforts to govern ourselves depends on the ability of the public to understand the increasingly complex problems of our shrinking, flat world. I believe that the future of our democracy also depends on our ability to assure that its blessings of economic prosperity and participation in the shaping of our collective future are truly accessible to all of our citizens. We can reach that goal only if all of our citizens are equipped with the tools necessary for success in tomorrow's society. Our schools provide those tools.

I have lived this commitment. My wife and I are products of the public schools in North Haven. Our daughters attended Hartford public schools from kindergarten through high school graduation in 1999 and 2002. I have volunteered my time as a member of the Hartford Board of Education or the State Board of Education for all but a few months of the last 20 years, and I am eager to continue that service.

Rather than dwelling on what shows on my resume, I would like to share with you some thoughts about how I see the role of the State Board of Education. In a recent article in Education Week, Arthur Levine, the former president of Teachers College at Columbia University, argued that we are at the beginning of a sweeping change in the structure of schools and our understanding of schooling. Our current system, he observes, was created at the height of the industrial age, and its focus on common processes governed by a standard clock reflects the culture and traditions of that age. But, Levine points out, we have conclusively learned that children do not all learn the same things in the same way and at the same time or pace. That knowledge points strongly to moving our education system from a focus on time and process – inputs – to knowledge and skills – the products of a successful education. Advancing technology gives us an increasing ability to deliver instruction at a distance and on demand, and to devise ways of demonstrating accomplishment rather than simply measuring exposure to instruction.

The promise of technological change is also a challenge. Our children live in a world drenched in constantly available information, a torrent that often threatens to bury knowledge in data. As rapidly as the world has changed in the last 20 years, it will almost certainly change even more in the next 20, and (bittersweet thought) our children, who laugh at our difficulties with ipods and dvd players, will almost certainly find the world their children will inhabit as confusing and challenging as we find their world.

In the face of such rapid change, Levine argues, no one yet knows what the replacement for the industrial system of education will or should look like. While we move toward a future of increasingly individualized education, we must be certain that our children receive the tools they need to separate fact from fantasy and to transform information into knowledge. We must also be certain that they receive a grounding in the common values and habits that make successful democracy possible. These are somewhat conflicting imperatives, and we are unlikely to know that we have created the new institutional structure that can reconcile them until we look up and find that it is here.

What then is the State Board of Education's role? In my view, it is to ask the questions and insist on the policies that keep our system open to the changes that must be allowed to occur. Our State Department of Education is filled with hard-working, very smart people, but they are by definition highly successful products of the current institutional structure. As informed outsiders, the State Board can and must help them to look beyond the structures and practices with which they are familiar.

Let me give you a concrete example. The Department has been working for several years on revising certification regulations, and it hopes to propose this spring a set of regulations that will be adopted next fall and go into effect for teachers certified in 2014. The regulation development process has included a lot of consultation with in-state experts and stakeholders, but it has not solicited the views of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a national coalition that routinely gives Connecticut very low grades on many of its certification policies. I do not think the NCTQ's grading is the last word, but before I vote, I want to hear its assessment and evaluate the Department's response.

Assuming the regulations we adopt will be in effect, largely unchanged, for 10-15 years after they take effect, as the historical record suggests, they will affect who is teaching in Connecticut in 2050 to 2060. That is long after the people writing those regulations will have retired, and after most of the members of the State Board, certainly including me, will have died. I am constantly aware of the long reach of what we do now, and determined that our regulations should have enough safety valves that they can accommodate the pressures for change that new structures of schooling and school governance are already generating.

This willingness to serve as the midwife to change that I believe is the essential function of the State Board is not, I assure you, an openness to educational fads. As my resume suggests, I am a firm believer in very traditional understandings of educational excellence. I also firmly believe that if we do not constantly strive to accommodate the changing world in which schooling takes place, we will not be able to achieve that level of excellence.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to addressing your questions.

Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee:

My name is William Farrell. I reside in Madison, and I am honored to be here today as the nominee of Governor Rell to serve as a member of the Gaming Policy Board. I was honored to be first appointed to the Board in April of 1999. I was reappointed in December of 2004. I was appointed as Chair by Governor Rell in March of 2007. The Board is the five member body which oversees the operation and activities of the Division of Special Revenue, Connecticut's gaming regulatory agency. The Board also has specific statutory responsibilities it discharges pursuant to Section 12-557e of the general statutes. Generally, the Board meets monthly throughout the year, addressing a variety of issues which may involve the Connecticut Lottery, system of Off-Track Betting, or Charitable Games. We also address matters involving the tribal casinos operated by the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes.

Pursuant to Section 12-557d of the statutes, to insure the highest standard of legalized gambling regulation, at least four of the Board members shall have training or experience in at least one of the following fields: corporate finance, economics, law, accounting, law enforcement, computer science or the pari-mutuel industry. My background has been in law enforcement. I have been privileged and honored to serve the City of New Haven and its Police Department through a career that spanned thirty-six years. I began as a police officer and rose through the ranks, retiring as chief in 1990. I am a veteran of the United States Marines, and I have been active in various fraternal or civic organizations over the years. In addition to service on the Board, I am the current president of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling.

Service on the Gaming Policy Board has been a great honor and an educational experience. Legal gaming, including tribal contributions, is returning over \$700 million to the State General Fund. The need to ensure the integrity of our authorized activities is paramount.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated, experienced staff of veterans who have served at Special Revenue for years, who are on the job day in and day out, managing the issuance of registrations, permits and licenses, inspections or audits of authorized activities, the investigation of criminal activity, and an administrative hearing process. It has been an honor to be associated with them.

Significant Board responsibilities include approving, suspending or revoking licenses; approving contracts for facilities, goods, components or services necessary to carry out the activities of the Off-Track Betting system; approving the types of pari-mutuel betting to be permitted; advising the Division's Executive Director concerning the conduct of Off-Track Betting facilities; assisting the Executive Director in developing regulations governing each of our gaming activities or responsibilities; and, hearing all appeals taken under the statutes from the Division's administrative proceedings.

I was very pleased, in 2007, when the legislature was able to fund a socio-economic study of the effects of legal gaming on the citizens of our state. The Division developed a responsible, comprehensive RFP, and a vendor was selected to do the study, the first of its kind in over ten years. Work on the study is nearing completion, after which it will be presented to the Governor, legislature, and public. I believe we will realize a quality product which should be a very useful tool to elected and appointed officials and administrators involved in policy formulation.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on, but I think I will stop at this time. As I have said, service on the Board has been a great honor. I am very appreciative of the Governor's consideration. I would very much appreciate your consideration. I would be pleased to respond to your questions, if any.